

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USLO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USICA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SOPN, SY
SUBJ: SYRIAN MEDIA DERIDE FIGHTER SALES

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN EDITORIALS MAY 17 FOCUS ON SENATE
REFUSAL TO BLOCK FIGHTER SALES TO ISRAEL, EGYPT, AND SAUDI
ARABIA BUT ADAMANTLY REFUSED TO SEE ANY POSTIVE IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE ARABS IN ITS. FOCUS OF CRITICISM IS ON SADAT
ALTHOUGH IMPLICIT CRITICISM OF SAUDIS IS THINLY VEILED.
MOST CONSTANT REFRAIN IS THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE BEEN
FURTHER STRENGTHENED VIS-A-VIS THE ARABS AND THAT ANY TALK
TO THE CONTRARY IS MERELY MEANT TO COVER FOR SADAT AS HE
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PROCEEDS IN HIS POLICY OF "CAPITULATION." END SUMMARY.

2. A SHORT ARTICLE ON THE SUBJECT ON THE FRONT PAGE OF
THISHRIIN CLAIMS THAT THE DEAL "COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE
EGYPTIAN REGIME IS IN NEED OF SUCH AN INITIATIVE IN ORDER TO RE-
ARRANGE ITS DETERIORATING DOMESTIC SITUATION AND TO FIND
PRETEXTS FOR CONTINUING ITS POLICY OF CAPITULATION WHICH

IS ASSOCIATED COMPLETELY WITH AMERICAN POLICY IN THE MIDEAST." IT PREDICTS SADAT WILL EXPLOIT THE SALE TO SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT THAT HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE US IS JUSTIFIED ANT TO SUGGEST THAT US POLICY IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT IS EVENHANDED.

3. MOST AUTHORITATIVE EDITORIAL ON SUBJECT BY EDITOR AMID KHULI APPEARS IN TISHRIIN. HE SCOFFS AT ISRAELI CRTICISM OF THE DEAL AND CHARGES THAT NOT ONLY ARE THE EGYPTIANS RECEIVING OBSOLESCEMENT PLANES, BUT THEY WILL NOT BE DELIVERED UNTIL AFTER 1983 (SIC). HE VIEWS THE ISRAELI CLAIM THAT THE SALE MAKES SAUDI ARABIA A CONFRONTATION STATE AS A FORM OF PRESSURE ON THE SAUDIS AND THAT A COMPARISON OF SAUDI AND ISRAELI TERRITORIES IN RELATION TO THEIR RESPECTIVE ARMAMENTS SHOWS THE ISRAELI CONCERN IS THAT OF "A WOLF TOWARD THE THREAT OF A LAMB". HE IMPLICITLY CRITICIZES THE SAUDIS IN REPORTING THAT THE US ANNOUNCED THAT THE SAUDI PLANES WOULD NOT BE USED AGAINST ISRAEL, WILL NOT BE TRANSFERRED TO THIRD COUNTRIES NOR BE FLOWN BY OTHER THAN SAUDI PILOTS. HE CLAIMS THE MESSAGE FROM KING KHALED TO PRESIDENT CARTER DEALT WITH THE COMMUNIST THREAT TO THE KIINGDOM (NOT THE ISARELI ONE).

4. KHULI IN HIS MOST TELLING REMARK VIEWS THE CURRENT UPROAR AS PART OF A US-ISRAELI "PSY-WAR" MEANT "TO WASH AWAY SADAT'S SHAME AND TO GIVE HIM A SURE CARD TO PLAY IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ORDER TO COVER HIS MAJOR CONCESSIONS."

5. THREE OTHER EDITORIALS DEAL WITH THE SAME TOPIC BUT ADD LITTLE TO KHULI'S MORE AUTHORITATIVE REMARKS. THE MAJOR THRUST IN ALL IS THAT ISRAEL HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED AND THAT SADAT WILL USE THESE PLANS TO DEFEND U.S. INTERESTS IN THE REGION AND NOT AGAINST ISRAEL. ONE EDITORILA INCORRECTLY NOTES THAT ISRAEL IS GETTING 110 F-15'S AND THUS SHIFTING THE BALANCE EVEN FURTHER AWAY FROM THE "REAL ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES."
END UNCLASSIFIED.

6. BEGIN LOU. COMMENT: WHILE THE SYRIANS HARDLY DARE ADMIT THAT SADAT'S INITIATIVE MAY HAVE PRODUCED A CLIMATE WHICH PERMITTED THE US TO SELL ADVANCED WEAPONS TO THE ARABS OR THAT SUCH A SALE HAS IMPORTANT SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE REGARDLESS OF THE ACTUAL NUMBERS OF PLANES SOLD, IT IS LIKELY THEY ARE PONDERING ITS IMPLICATION ESPECIALLY RELATING TO US WILLINGNESS TO BREAK WITH ISRAEL WHEN PERCEIVED US INTEREST ARE AT STAKE. ON THE OTHER HAND, ONE ELEMENT OF THESE DEITORIALS PREBABLY REFLECTS A REAL SYRIAN APPREHENSION-- SADAT WILL USE THE DEAL TO CONTINUE

HIS INITIATIVE AND TO MAKE FURTHER "CONCESSIONS" THE THE
ISRAELIS.
PELLETREAU

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